



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

Dear Colleague:

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Education, I am pleased to invite you to participate in two important but separate events taking place this fall: 1) the three regional Improving America's Schools (IAS) conferences and 2) a series of seven regional public forums to provide input on the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These events are described below under their respective titles.

**IMPROVING AMERICA'S SCHOOLS CONFERENCES (IAS)**

The three IAS conferences are scheduled as follows:

- ▶ Mobile, Alabama ..... October 17-19
- ▶ Reno, Nevada ..... November 13-15
- ▶ San Antonio, Texas ..... December 17-19



I want to strongly encourage you to take advantage of these important opportunities not only to learn about the Department's efforts in educational reform designed to improve results for all children, but to find out about new developments in our programs in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS).

As you will note from the attached information sheet, these conferences will provide valuable information on new and continuing programs, comprehensive school reform, funding opportunities, and more. Intensive educational reform institutes will be held on seventeen important topics including: reading, inclusionary practices, safe schools and building positive school environments, technology, family involvement, achieving English language fluency, rethinking high schools, and mastering math. Please refer to Attachment 1 or check the IAS website at [www.ncbe.gwu.edu/iasconferences](http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/iasconferences) for more details.

I want to call your attention to several planned events and institutes at the IAS conferences that relate specifically to the special education and rehabilitation community. On the morning of the first day of each conference, I will host a Priority Session on "IDEA Reauthorization." I will present the Administration's plans for the upcoming reauthorization of IDEA and some of the major issues that will likely be considered during the reauthorization. In the afternoon of the first day of each conference we are planning two workshops: one on increasing accountability through universal design of assessment and the other on disproportionate representation of minorities in special education.

On the second day of the conferences, two institutes are particularly relevant to special education personnel:

- ▶ Rob Horner, from the OSERS-funded project, Center on Positive Interventions and Supports, at the University of Oregon, will participate in the institute on Safe

Schools at the Reno conference. He will discuss the use of positive peer interventions in school programs.

- ▶ Ed Kame'enui and Deborah Simmons from the OSERS' funded project, Project Optimize, at the University of Oregon will discuss a schoolwide beginning reading model that addresses the instructional needs in reading of all children. They will present at the Reno and San Antonio conferences.

Finally, in a session in the morning of the third day of each conference, JoLeta Reynolds, Patty Guard, and I will listen to you as you present your comments about experiences implementing the IDEA, perceived needs to change the law and/or regulations, and suggestions for issues critical to the upcoming reauthorization of the IDEA.

Please review Attachment 1 regarding the IAS conferences and register as soon as possible. For questions or additional information, please call 1-800-203-5494. Also, please feel free to call Jim Button in my Office at 202-205-8239 or e-mail him at [James.Button@ed.gov](mailto:James.Button@ed.gov).

## **REGIONAL PUBLIC FORUMS ON THE REAUTHORIZATION OF IDEA**

OSERS will also hold a series of seven regional public forums to provide input on the reauthorization of the IDEA. Three of these forums will be held in conjunction with the IAS conferences, while the other four are scheduled in other cities. The cities and dates of all the regional public input forums are provided below:

- ▶ Salt Lake City, Utah..... October 10
- ▶ Mobile, Alabama ..... October 16 & 19
- ▶ Minneapolis, Minnesota..... October 23
- ▶ Providence, Rhode Island ..... November 5
- ▶ Reno, Nevada ..... November 15
- ▶ District of Columbia ..... December 6
- ▶ San Antonio, Texas ..... December 19

The exact location and times of these regional public forums, as well as additional information on guidelines for comments, provision for childcare, and contact information is provided in Attachment 2. If you have further questions about these regional public forums that cannot be directed to the Regional Resource Center (RRC) contacts listed in the second attachment, please call Jim Button at 202-205-8239 or e-mail him at [James.Button@ed.gov](mailto:James.Button@ed.gov)

Addressing issues affecting students and their families requires input from parents, educators, students with disabilities, administrators, school board members, policy makers, and other interested individuals. I hope that all members of the learning community will take advantage of these opportunities to provide input critical to the upcoming reauthorization of the IDEA

#### **FURTHER DISSEMINATION OF THIS INFORMATION**

Please disseminate the attached information in all of your communications with key stakeholders. All events are totally accessible and interpreters will be available. Information on stipends for childcare for parents needing this service is also included in Attachment 2. I encourage you to extend this invitation to all interested individuals, including those with disabilities, in your community.

Secretary Paige, other Department Assistant Secretaries, and I look forward to seeing you at the IAS conferences. I especially look forward to hearing from you at the regional public forums as we embark on our efforts to reauthorize the IDEA.

Robert H. Pasternack, Ph.D.